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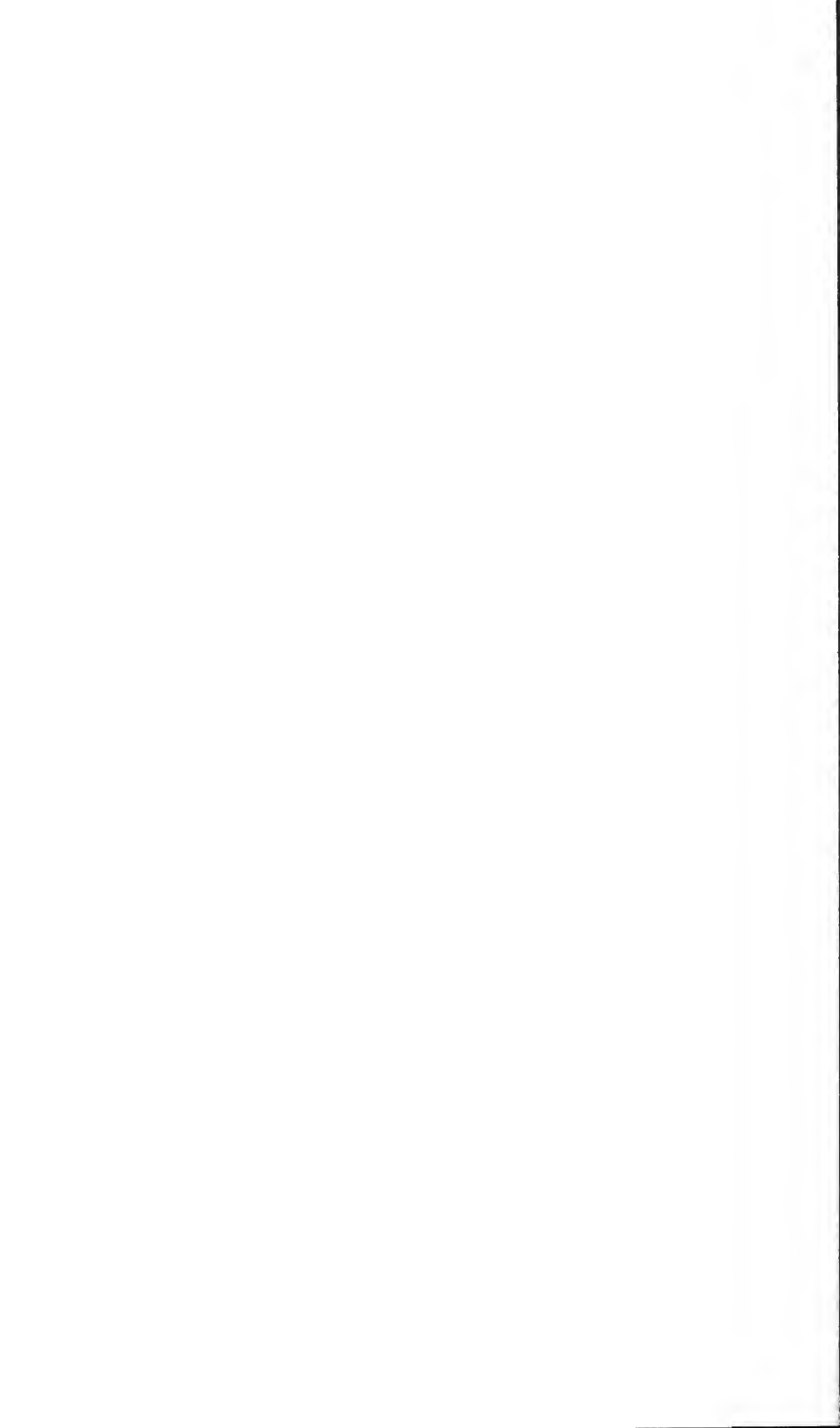
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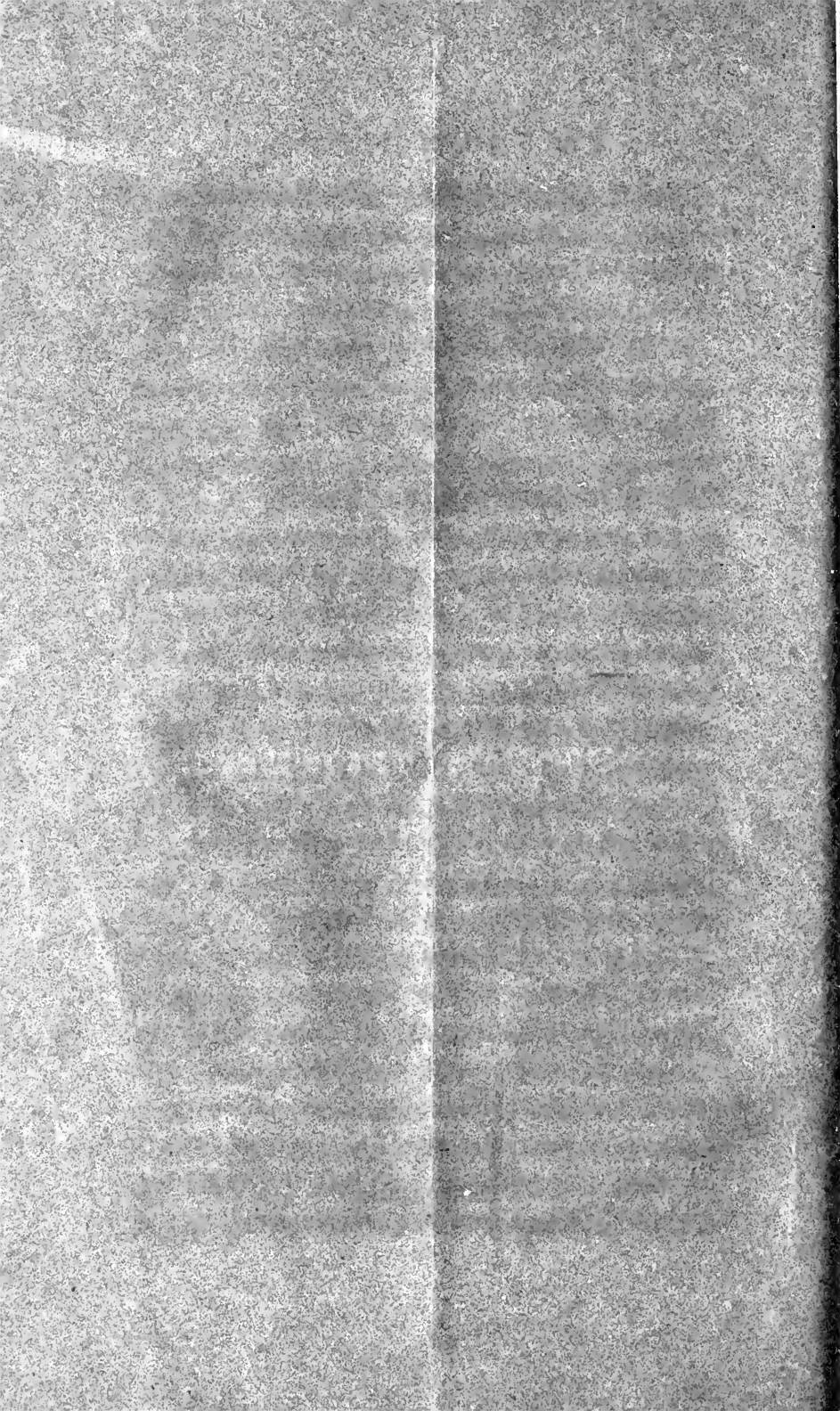






With the affectionate regards
of the author

The Voice of the Lord.



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The Voice of the Lord:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, WASHINGTON,

BY REQUEST OF THE VESTRY,

On Friday before Ascension Day, Fourteenth of May, 1841,

THE DAY OF HUMILIATION, FASTING, AND PRAYER, RECOMMENDED BY
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON,

LATE PRESIDENT;

By WILLIAM ROLLINSON WHITTINGHAM, D. D.,
BISHOP OF MARYLAND.

(PRINTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE VESTRY.)

WASHINGTON:
PUBLISHED BY WM. MORRISON.
1841.

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TENTH STREET.

It may be proper to state that Bishop WHITTINGHAM, shortly after the death of the late President, had been requested by the Rector and Vestry of St. John's Church to preach at an early day on the subject of the national bereavement, in the church to which General Harrison belonged, in which he was accustomed to kneel before the Majesty of Heaven and worship the God of his fathers; but, owing to previous appointments of the Bishop for a visitation to a remote part of the Diocese, which occupied some weeks, it was unavoidably delayed until the very judicious appointment of a day by President Tyler, for fasting, humiliation, and prayer. On this solemn occasion, and from the great regard so generally entertained for the high office and character of the deceased President, the interior of the church was clad in deep mourning. The pulpit and desk, the chancel and communion altar, with the ascent to the pulpit, were hung with black drapery, together with the whole circle of the gallery, including the organ and the gallery of the choir.

But the most impressive object that struck the eye, was the deserted pew—the vacant seat of the late President. Its conspicuous location near the chancel, and being covered with black velvet, rendered its appearance so appalling as at once to awe the best feelings of the heart with the solemnity of death. For, notwithstanding the great concourse in attendance, among whom were the President and other high officers of the Government, no one presumed to enter its solemn precincts. Indeed, from the day it was clad in mourning, for the funeral obsequies, to the present, no human being appeared disposed to invade its sable enclosure; the place seemed sacred, and loudly to speak in the still voice of silent bereavement, what was proclaimed at the Capital at the time of his decease, and echoed from every town, village, and hamlet, throughout this vast nation—"THE PRESIDENT IS DEAD!"

WILLIAM HAWLEY.

S E R M O N .

AMOS, iii: 8—THE LORD GOD HATH SPOKEN. WHO CAN BUT PROPHECY?

ON an occasion like this, brethren, few words and plain best become the speaker. No eloquence can equal that of the fact. Each member of the auditory feels more than the orator dare hope to be able to express. The voice of God is recognized by all, and man's fittest part is to be silent.

It is as one put in trust with the Gospel that I am here, to entreat men like myself to listen to that voice, and learn from it the true lesson it is teaching. No eulogy of the dead shall be attempted. The sorrow of a whole people is his best eulogy. The united voices of those who so lately waged a bitter contest on his account speak his praise, and supersede the poor efforts of one who had not the privilege to know him, and certainly has not the power to do his noble-hearted simplicity, integrity, and uprightness, any justice. Thousands of tongues and pens shall be occupied with the theme of a life and character as which, perhaps, it could be hardly possible to select

a specimen at once so favorable and so true of the genuine *American*.

The pulpit has other themes and another errand. Not the praise of the departed, however just ; nor yet the grief of the bereaved, however bitter ; but the benefit of surviving mortals, fast hastening to that account which he whom they mourn has gone to render, demands the attention of a Minister of Christ, permitted to address his fellow-sinners in his Master's name.

WE MAY DERIVE BENEFIT FROM THIS DISPENSATION, AS AN ASTOUNDING EXAMPLE OF THE INSTABILITY OF LIFE.

"Here we have no continuing city," said the inspired Apostle. All life proves the truth, and all men own it ; and yet every fresh instance comes upon us as a startling call to the half-awakened sleeper : he rouses, looks around, thinks he has been dreaming, and lays him down to fresh slumbers. So we see the grave yawn before us, and devour all that we covet and all that we make our stay, and, for the moment, stand awe-struck in contemplation of eternity ; but in the next, engage anew in life's ceaseless round, with as much earnestness and zest as ever, and go on, planning and desiring, laboring and striving to attain, with as few misgivings about the nature and value of our occupations as though we had yet to learn that we are mortal.

Never, perhaps, did God in mercy teach that lesson to the world more signally, than in the blow just inflicted on this people. Death comes suddenly in the battle field, in the hour of victory ; but when Gustavus fell at Lutzen, though Europe mourned the champion of religious freedom snatched from her in her utmost need, she felt that death had but claimed his own, in a fitting time and place. It is in the hour of such triumph as that with which this capital resounded but as yesterday, that the death-summons thrills with horrid blare on the unexpected ear ; and the thousands of thousands who exulted in aspirations, and plans, and labors crowned with complete success, by the exaltation of the man whom they loved to honor, and in whom their hopes concen-tered as the chosen instrument of prosperity and glory to the nation, raise one wild cry of utter disappointment, when the hand of Heaven interposes and takes back the reclaimed loan, which they fondly looked on as their own. Not that any had forgotten that he whom they had raised to rule—hero, patriot, and sage, as they deemed that he had proved himself, and father of his people, as he already more than promised to become—was but a mere man, and, as such, miserable and mortal. We knew it, as we know that it will shortly be our turn to follow him ; and realized it just as little. Calculations, favorable and adverse, expectations and apprehensions, hopes and doubts, all turned on

the will and ability of him to whom the reins of government had been committed. The gaze of every eye, the theme of every tongue, the very hinge of changes in which millions of freemen professed to anticipate the conservation or destruction of their boasted institutions and blood-bought rights, our late Chief Magistrate stood before his country, after a contest such as has no precedent in its annals, in an eminence and responsibility almost equally unprecedented. Scarcely are his feet planted on the proud elevation, when the grave opens, and he is gone !

“On the verge
Of exultation hangs a dirge.”

Truly, “man, being in honor, abideth not, and the thoughts of man, in his best estate, are but vanity !”

There is no station of life to which this warning does not come home. We have each of us a sphere of influence to fill, a round of duty to discharge. To none of us can the occupation of that field of influence and duty be more assured than his was whom God hath taken. How few of us so occupy it as if we believed the fact ! In truth, we do not believe it. We assure ourselves that there will be time for the accomplishment of our designs and completion of our undertakings, and are content to rest on the miserable security. Who among us turns all his opportunities to account at once ? Who does not nurse his darling projects of reform to be commenced, good

to be effected, influence to be used, example to be set, principles to be followed out, at some future and more convenient season? Alas! did not even he who in so many respects, by his noble promptness, set a bright example of turning the present to account, in one belie his principle, and die without the comfort of his Lord's ordinance, because he had postponed the acknowledged duty, but not sufficiently appreciated the privilege? How many of those who now hear me are more or less distinctly cherishing like intentions of future advancement in the path of duty, and appropriation of advantage which they cannot bring themselves to relinquish utterly, but find it inconvenient to claim and use at once? I dare not guess, and fear to know; but it needs little acquaintance with the deceitful ways of the world to be assured that they are many. Schemes of gain, of ambition, of industry, of patriotism, of benevolence even, so absorb the faculties of attention, that there is no leisure for religion, with its awful realities and solemn duties. The very man who reverences its claims, and honors its observances, so long as they remain mere general forms, with sincere respect, says daily, in effect, to the Lord from heaven, who bought him with his own blood on Calvary, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." Day after day steals

on, and each, as it drops into the ocean of past eternity, carries with it a portion of the life of that man's soul; for each diminishes the opportunity and the probability of his turning to his God. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," and none so well know it as they who frequent the avenues of this mart of place and power; but oh, when will they learn the horrible deadliness of that sickness which chills the heart that has itself deferred repentance and living faith? And for what deferred them? For that which cannot satisfy, which they cannot control, which they can in no way so surely attain and realize, as by the personal self-devotion to the service of God reconciled in Christ, which they inconsiderately regard as conflicting with their aims and duties. They seek peace, happiness, it may be, usefulness. Peace is a delusion, and happiness a lie, to the man who seeks them not in God. Usefulness is the gift of God, and the growth of faith and holiness.

Take the highest form of social duty, that of the statesman and ruler, for example. His ends and means are alike out of his own control, and wholly within that of ONE who has promised to make all things work together for good to those who love Him. Is it not self-evident, that to seek the fulfilment of that promise must be his highest wisdom? That the first step towards sure results must be the sincere acknowledgment of the Power on which only they depend?

AS LEADING TO THAT ACKNOWLEDGMENT BY FURNISHING A SIGNAL PROOF OF GOD'S SOVEREIGN DISPOSAL OF EVENTS, JUDGMENT MAY BECOME A MERCY TO US IN THE DISPENSATION FOR WHICH WE GRIEVE.

Death is always awful. Sudden death, in any instance, tends to excite alarm and horror. But the death of the head of a people is an event broadly distinguished from that of any other member of society, be his station, character, or influence, what they may. It is the interposition of the Lord and Giver of Life to assert his sovereignty in a way that admits of neither doubt nor cavil, and comes home to the conviction of every one. No individual so lowly, that he has not a direct interest in the loss: none so far removed as not to feel it. The symbol of his nationality, the centre of the circle in which his rights and duties are bound up, *is gone*; and a hand unseen, but irresistible, is perceived to have been there, giving token of its inevitable grasp.

It is true that wise provision for the contingency hinders the nation from being left without an actual head; but the loss is none the less real and sensible. The fellow-being whom the people chose to be the depositary of its honor, power, and energy, is snatched away, and God, by His visitation, substitutes another. Demonstration is given of the unpalatable truth, that the deliberate resolve of a great nation may be futile as an infant's whim, and the action of its combined

millions inconsequential as the freak of a madman, when the will of Him who made us interferes.

Nor is that all. The absolute subjection of the policy and standing of this people, *as a people*, to the divine control, is written with a sunbeam on the page that records the death of its departed President. It is admitted that no change may have been actually produced, in this instance, in its counsels and administration; but who so blind as not to see that the same power which has only showed itself, might as easily be so put forth as at once to bring counsel to nought and frustrate execution? The summons that called away the dead, speaks to each survivor in the language once addressed to the Jewish state, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it."

Now if there be one thing declared plainly to all of every degree in the revelation which God has vouchsafed us of His will, it is this: that the counsels and course of those who serve Him in singleness of heart and simple faith shall prosper, while the policy of the worldly minded and unbelieving shall be brought to nought. And, brethren, though I know that the defective views with which men read the book of history have hindered very many, perhaps most, from the perception of the fact, yet it may be fearlessly and not unadvisedly asserted, that the teaching of that

book is entirely and most manifestly in accordance with that of revelation, on this point. The people that have served the Lord have prospered, and the governors that have ruled and taken counsel in His fear have been crowned with blessing, while disregard of His eternal laws, and rebellion against His will, in national plans and undertakings, have brought ruin and destruction in their train, from the earliest dawn of history until now. Vengeance may have overtaken crime with varying degrees of swiftness, and blessing may have assumed various, and sometimes, to mere human eyes, unlovely forms ; but the road they travel has been and ever will be sure. What was specially declared in prophecy of Israel, is historically true in its most general application : "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." How awfully interesting, then, is the proof that we have just received of the power of Him whose truth is pledged to such results ! It is the glittering of "the sword of the Almighty, sharpened to make sure slaughter ; shall we then make mirth ?"

God be thanked that, by wise counsel, and His blessing to give the people a willing heart, this day's solemnities evince a very different disposition. They infuse a strange mixture of joy into the sadness of the Christian, as he joins in spirit with the multitudes gathered in ten thousand temples, to bear their testi-

mony that the Lord reigneth, and to plead with Him to turn away His judgments. Sad as any but a most unenviably apathetic heart must be, in the contemplation of so signal a proof of the worthlessness of human hopes and human greatness, the true philanthropist must find comfort in the temper with which the people that, of all under the sun, perhaps, most needs the lesson of self distrust and subjection to a higher power, has received it. He may mourn God's visitation—and, as a man and a citizen, it were to his shame if he did not—but he must rejoice at the profit which seems already growing out of it, or he were a recreant to still higher obligations.

The danger is, lest this formal recognition of the Divine sovereignty be merely formal, transient and unproductive of any good effects or influence on character, national and individual. It is easy in words to own the sway of Him who is invisible, and even outwardly to bend the knee before Him, and yet be devoid of any real appreciation of that sway. To own it in truth, is to rejoice in it, and to strive to work it out, unless we share the temper and prospect of those miserable spirits who have forever estranged themselves from the Author of their being. There is no neutrality in this matter—no absolute indifference. The will of God must be our law, the love of God our motive, the glory of God our end; or we are, however ignorantly or unconsciously, arrayed against

Him, and in danger of the fearful consequences of the most unnatural rebellion, of creatures against their Creator—frail dependants against the Source and Sustainer of their existence.

Such danger is but too obviously incurred by any slight, personal or national, of God's revelation of himself in Christ. Admit its facts—of which it is hard to say whether greater boldness is required to deny their evidence, or credulity to swallow the enormous absurdities consequent upon such denial—admit its facts, and obedience *to that revelation* becomes the test of submission to the Deity. The people or the man that puts it by and goes on regardless of its principles and claims, is as really, though less grossly, in a state of opposition to the Supreme Ruler, as if engaged in idol worship.

On this score, surely we have ground for shame and fear. God has not been in all our thoughts *as a people*; and the land in its length and breadth teems with evidence how little His word and ordinances, His holy will and wondrous love, have been regarded by individuals. After long years of absolute godlessness in all that gave us character as a nation, and the most fearful disregard of personal profession of religion on the part of men high in office and authority, it was as a gracious rain of heaven to a land parched with drought, when WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON appeared before his countrymen, to take

their highest magistracy as a gift from God, and professed the resolve to hold it in the strength which Christ supplies. He did not ascend the steps of that Capitol in vain, had he left behind him the memory of no other act, no other words, than those of humble self distrust, in which, as the head of a mighty nation, he bowed himself before his God, and sought a blessing from his Saviour. Noble profession! Noble, because none doubted, none dared to doubt, its entire sincerity. How wondrously is the example urged home on us with power, by the mysterious dispensation that followed on so closely! The chord of sympathy which vibrated responsive to the avowal of religious motive in our President, from Maine to Florida, and from the Atlantic to the farthest West, had hardly been awakened, when the voice that called its answer forth was hushed forever! Its words are endowed with all the value of a legacy, and all the solemn weight of a message from the grave. Yes, departed leader, a "Christian people" hears it, and mourns thy loss as that of a Christian head; and this day testifies its veneration for thy memory, by following thee to the throne of grace and mercy in its hour of trial!

We have approached that throne of grace, brethren, in words of humiliation and contrition. If they have been sincere, we have derived from our visitation a benefit which, we may not doubt, it was within the

the Divine design that this nation should receive from it. Whatever danger there may be in the particular interpretation of the Divine judgments, with reference to their special causes, there can be none in the general inference that they convey a message of rebuke, nor in the endeavor to search out what there is in us that may have deserved such rebuke, whether it called it forth or no.

Our Maker explained the intention of His dealings with His chosen people to be "to prove them and to humble them, lest when they had eaten and were full, and had built goodly houses and dwelt therein, and had prospered in their labors and their gains, their hearts should be lifted up, and they should forget the Lord their God, and say in their heart, *my* power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth." It needs no surly moroseness nor snarling censoriousness, to discover in this inspired description of a national character, which He who changeth not has stamped with His terrible disapproval, a too faithful portraiture of ours. For any thing by which we stand committed as a people, in which the world hears the nation's voice, for which we are responsible in our nationality before God and man, we have, almost for generations, gone on in heartless taciturnity, shunning to avow indebtedness and obligation, and, by our very silence, claiming the supreme direction and disposal of our

ways. As we prospered, we grew insolent. Open infidelity stalked abroad unblushingly, and pointed with sly finger to the easy and enticing road to downright crime. The hint was not thrown away, and luxury, licentiousness, lawless riot and outrage, and crimes of the deepest dye, multiplied upon us in all directions. He who declares that he took away Sodom because "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness" made her "haughty," has been warning us by a series of visitations to consider our ways before it be too late. Pestilence, fire, scarcity, just enough to teach that we are not out of the reach of famine; commercial derangements and disaster almost equivalent to universal bankruptcy; the prostration of individual and national credit; war of the most expensive, disgraceful, and unprofitable kind; and now, last of all, the decease of the man to whom a large majority of the nation professed to look for a remedy of at least a portion of these evils, just when placed where they had longed, and labored, and contended with unexampled energy that he might be: is this succession of disasters, crowded into less than seven short years, mistakeable? If ever Providence assumed the form of revelation, it has done so for us, and made known our danger and God's will. We are a money-getting, money-loving people, and money has been made our curse. We boasted in our hearts, and

our very public prints, in their garrulity, proclaimed the boast, that the scourges of the Lord had no mission for our shores, and in the twinkling of an eye they were upon us—pestilence in all its horror; war, without its glories; and want, even while the soil gave its customary returns for labor, and the seasons smiled upon the husbandman. We glory in our institutions, and now, in their highest instrument and symbol, they wither under the finger of the Lord.

“Thou son of man,” said his spirit, of old time, to the Prophet, “shall it not be, in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereon they set their minds—that he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it in thine ears! In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb; and thou shalt be a sign unto them, and they shall know that I am the Lord.”

What message, think you, brethren, would the Prophet utter in our ears, in fulfilment of this charge? Would he not say to him whom God has so strangely called to take place among the rulers of the earth, “Remember who has given thee authority, and wield it as in His sight, and as accountable to Him. Remember that he who so lately bore it has been able to take with him none of the myriads of favoring

breaths that swelled the gale of his prosperity, but has gone *alone* to judgment. Remember that, for thought, word, and deed, the first man among his people has a vastly different account to render from the private citizen, whose omissions and short comings, negligences and indifference, *may* hurt no one but himself, which the ruler's never can. Remember thine own weakness, and *who* is able to make thee strong!"

Would he not urge the counsellors in whose wisdom lies the secret of the nation's strength, to "become fools" in the sense of the Apostle, "that they may be wise;" to humble themselves at the feet of Christ their Saviour, and repose their trust, their hopes, their stay, on the Redeemer who claims them as his purchase, that their high responsibilities may be turned to use for the fulfilment of His mission of mercy, peace, and blessing to a race sold under sin! To bear in memory that, in proportion to the measure of the gifts of mind and station with which their Maker has endowed them, will be the reward through Christ of faithfulness, and the punishment of neglect to use them for His glory?

Would he not "open his mouth" in indignant expostulation with the legislator whose unblushing disregard of the laws of God and man has filled our council halls with brawling, bitterness, the murderer's

threat, and the spewing of the drunkard, and spread a foul example of heady passion and ungoverned self-indulgence throughout the land? Would he “be dumb” to refrain from reproaching them with worse than brutish ignorance of their own position and accountability; from warning them that for *all* these things God will bring them into judgment, and exact of them a reckoning for sins which their example fostered, while it was their mission to repress them, for high and holy privileges and functions worse than prostituted, and for duties never even realized, far less performed?

Would he withhold His reproofs from those whose craving thirst for gain bids fair to realize the worst exaggerations of the satirist, and settle a foul stain upon our character as a people? Would he pass unnoticed the low estimate of honorable industry and unsullied poverty, in the false standards of public opinion, when compared with splendor purchased by base breach of trust or dishonest paltering with oaths and contracts? Would he leave unwarned the thousands who incur debts they can never pay, and burden life with miserable shifts and meannesses, for the sake of keeping up appearances unsuited to their station, and building on a rotten credit a false respectability?

These things are not the mere outbreaks of the

taint of sin that spreads equally through our race. They already go far toward distinguishing us *as a nation*; toward constituting traits of popular character, and a part—Oh! the goading shame—of our reputation as a country!

“For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with waters, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me.” No series of calamities, no sudden blow could oppress or surprise a people steadfast in its own moral purity and greatness. We have enough left of both, by God’s blessing, to bear us through our trials; but they *are* trials, and most sore ones, because the sting of self-condemnation rankles in the wound they make. The loss we now mourn is doubled by the need that *such* a people had of *such* a head. The visitation derives new severity from the assurance that abuse of blessings had deserved it.

How then shall we receive it? In a spirit of querulous complaint, raising our voice against the times, the people, the government, the abuses of trade and trust, the growth of luxury—every thing, but *ourselves*? No, brethren, not if we are indeed profited. There could be no worse symptom of incurable disease than such a result, in the clamorous outcry of each against all; of all against abstraction and generalities; of classes against classes; profes-

sions against professions; member against member, of the one great body. It is the cure of individuals that is needed to effect the relief of the mass, and it is *as* individuals that they must be cured, and, in great degree, by their own resort to the proper remedies. *Laws* we have, and good ones; but *example* is wanting, to give law its due honor and restraining power—example, of value, undoubtedly, in proportion to the station of the individual, but in no case, from the highest to the lowest, without its worth and efficacy. Let each, in his place, show forth in himself the fruits of a holy and religious fear of the Lord and Judge of all. Let each turn his thoughts inward and backward, on his own conscience and past course, and seek there the work that is for him to do. Who among us has lived in the sight of God, so as to deserve his own share of our large measure of public and private blessings? Whose heart holds him excused of unbelief, ingratitude, unholiness, contaminating his thoughts and speech and life? How many, even openly, profess to regard these crimes, as toward God, as of minor importance, or of none, compared with the violations of the rule of right as between man and man. A more horrible fallacy never deluded man's self-deceiving heart; yet they who entertain it and live upon it from day to day and year after year, take their place in the community, mingle in its inte-

rests, even assume its management, and when the tokens of indignation are no longer to be mistaken, say, "why, what evil have I done?" What evil? Insulted the majesty of the most high by the refusal or contempt of the provisions of His mercy! Is that a right thing? Despised the treasure of His fondest love, lavished in the mission of His Son, with His message of redemption, pardon, and spiritual life? Is that a matter of no account? Proclaimed before men and angels that His own revelation of His attributes and will is for you no better than a lie! Is that nothing?

My brethren, as God liveth, these things must be accounted for! And the prevalence among us, under the noonday blaze of Gospel light that we enjoy, of so great a degree of practical and secret infidelity, and the culpable indifference towards it shown by professing Christians, is accounted for, in the evils that have come upon us; not in the way of retribution, but in admonition, rebuke, and fatherly premonition of the worse judgment that one day awaits those who have here been content to waste their time of trial in a practical denial of the Lord who bought them! "THE LORD'S VOICE CRIETH UNTO THE CITY, HEAR YE THE ROD, AND WHO HATH APPOINTED IT!"





